

## Tower Ravens:

**London's newest rapper sword dance team**

In April 2012 Thrales Rapper hosted DERT (the annual Dance England Rapper Tournament) with the competition taking place in Soho pubs and evening events at Cecil Sharp House. Although Thrales are a long established male team and Hawksword formed a few years ago as a mixed gender longsword and rapper team, there was no all-female rapper sword dancing team in London at the time. Three young women (Rachel Sheridan, Lindsey Kennedy and Nicola Osborne) decided that this needed to change and that DERT 2012 would be the best opportunity they'd ever get to recruit some more women interested in dancing rapper in London.

18 months later and the group have a name - Tower Ravens - a musician, a number of dancers, a 'Tommy' complete with beefeater style costume, a set of swords (a beautifully made set by Jimmie Kilner) and two dances. They crawl pubs in a different part of London on the last Thursday of each month - see [www.towerravens.org.uk](http://www.towerravens.org.uk) for details - and always get a lot of interest from the punters, and usually some loud cheers too! In March 2013 they entered DERT coming a respectable 6th out of 13 in the open class. In October they performed at their first festival in Tenterden and are hoping for more opportunities to dance at festivals in 2014.

Tower Ravens practise every Monday evening at St Michael's church hall on Cornhill, near Bank from 7.30pm until 9.30pm. They are always open to new members - contact [info@towerravens.org.uk](mailto:info@towerravens.org.uk) or visit [www.towerravens.org.uk](http://www.towerravens.org.uk) for more information. Catch the Tower Ravens in action at one of their next London crawls: 19 December in Farringdon (meet at The Castle, Cowcross Street at 7.30pm) or 30 January in Islington (meet at The Nag's Head, Upper Street at 7.30pm).

*Ffion Mair*

*Ffion also sings and plays as part of The Foxglove Trio and maintains a blog about Welsh folk song at [caneuongerin.wordpress.com](http://caneuongerin.wordpress.com).*

*The trio will be appearing at Tiller Flat on 6 December and at a variety of London venues in February and March. For details of those please see the next issue of the magazine.*

## The Music Box

**Intimate, cozy and a little bit magic.**

In the heart of arguably London's most trendy area is an unexpected oasis of calm. Nestled in between The Hoxton Pony and Strongrooms on Curtain Road, Shoreditch is The Music Box Folk and Acoustic club at Paper Dress Vintage. Paper Dress Vintage is a clothes shop by day and by night an intimate and friendly live music venue which hosts The Music Box on the second Wednesday of the month. They put on four acts each evening, who perform in the shop window to an audience gathered at a mismatched selection of vintage chairs and tables.

The night is hosted by three musicians – Ian and Ruth Bennett and Alex Hiscox – and they run the club by simple, musician-focused values. For them, making sure that the musicians have a good experience when they come to perform is key. The friendly and positive atmosphere this creates feeds through to the audience's experience of the night. Simply put, if the musicians are happy then everyone will be happy. And it seems to be working; since The Music Box started, just under two years ago, the monthly event has gained rave reviews from audiences and artists alike. Ffion Mair from The Foxglove Trio says, "We really enjoyed performing at The Music Box. Playing in a shop window was a new and interesting experience for us! The Music Box organisers are professional and enthusiastic about the acts they put on."

The Music Box is curated in a way that introduces audiences to various sides of folk and acoustic music, from traditional folk to contemporary singer-songwriters and acoustic-based bands. No matter what the style, the evening creates a supportive and listening environment for the four performers that are booked to play. Local songwriter Laura Maidment says "The Music Box has created something really special, letting songwriters have their music truly heard." and Adam White says that playing at the club is "a thoroughly rewarding and rare experience for any live musician." It seems that the audience agree. Mike Watts, a regular visitor to the club, has even gone so far as to call it "a music lover's Shangri La". High praise indeed!

A new departure for The Music Box is a monthly guest appearance on ZoneOneRadio.com, where Ian presents music from past and future artists that have played at the club, including the occasional